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24 March 1954

ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS

I. The Situation

A. Israeli public angered by massacre of 11 Israelis on 17 March.

1. View it proof government's moderation toward Arabs
futile.

2. Some government elements favor "treat 'em rough" policy.

B. Government forced to take emotional, unsound steps.

1. Accused Jordan of crime without evidence.

2. Denounced American chairman of UN Armistice Commission
for not supporting Israeli position.

3. Announced boycott of commission if chairman remains.

4. Demanding West and UN condemn Jordan.

C. Jordan and Syria expect full-scale Israeli attack.

1. Jordan cooperated fully in search for murderers.

2. Weak Syrian government in no position to wage war --

defensive deployment of four of seven brigades near

border.

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II. Likely developments

A. Moderate-extremist struggle in Israeli government will be intensified.

1. Defense Minister Lavon, Chief of Staff Dayan, ex-prime minister Ben Gurion favor strong action.

2. They see downfall of moderate Prime Minister Sharett and Israel "running amuck" if West does not denounce Jordan.

B. With or without denunciation, Sharett being pushed toward extremism.

1. Possibly more reprisals and harsher treatment of infiltrators.

2. Likely to exploit general Arab instability.

C. Neither Sharett nor any Arab government wants resumption 1948 hostilities.

D. However, another serious incident may give rein to Israeli extremists. Consul General Tyler in Jerusalem sees situation more tense than at any time in past three years.

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